

Brownlow, Kellie

From: Brownlow, Kellie
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2015 7:21 AM
To: 'Chapman, Leroy (CMG-Atlanta)'
Cc: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta); Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta)
Subject: RE: Correction

Leroy

Thank you for your prompt response. There are a few things I think are important for you to know regarding this particular situation and my role in the Chairman's office.

Dan is right. It is common for reporters to interview commissioners either in front of the dais or as they step down from the dais following board meetings. However, it is not common for reporters to step up onto the stairs leading behind the dais. I believe that is why the police officer approached to escort the Chairman after Dan began walking up the stairs. As I mentioned the County Attorney also overheard the encounter and confirmed with me the question asked of Chairman Lee was about campaign finance. I welcome you to contact her directly about this.

After the Chairman left the room I walked up to Dan and offered to work with him to get what he needs from the Chairman. He responded with "Oh yeah, about campaign finance?" I responded that as a county employee, this particular topic is out of my purview. He did not follow up with additional questions about the South Cobb Redevelopment Authority or ethics code amendments, even when I offered the opportunity. Therefore it is hard for me to understand how it could be factual for Mr. Klepal to report in the AJC that Chairman Lee refused to comment on a question about ethics when the question was not posed to him nor to me in my follow up on his behalf.

Finally, regarding Mr. Klepal's complaint about department heads, I want to clarify that I am only responsible for media and communications in the Office of the Chairman. I do not coordinate media contact or communications for the County Manager nor any of the county department heads.

Again, I genuinely appreciate your response and look forward to working with you.

Kellie

Kellie Anne Brownlow
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From: Chapman, Leroy (CMG-Atlanta) [<mailto:Leroy.Chapman@ajc.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, July 15, 2015 6:21 PM
To: Brownlow, Kellie
Cc: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta); Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta)
Subject: RE: Correction

Ms. Brownlow,

Thanks for reaching out. Anytime you have concern with our coverage, do not hesitate to send me a note or give me a call. My telephone number here is 404-526-5614.

I think the first order of business is to talk to Dan and his immediate supervisor about their efforts to reach the chairman. I'll need to get his side of this.

I'm glad to hear you are working hard to make Chairman Lee accessible to the media and responsive to our requests. Our recent history with Chairman Lee has not been one of cooperation. I am delighted to know you're changing that.

I agree that "media protocol is not an uncommon practice in local government." In Gwinnett, Fulton, DeKalb and other metro counties whatever protocols might be in place typically result in the chairmen making themselves available to answer basic questions.

I will follow up after speaking with Dan.

Best,

Leroy Chapman Jr.
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From: Brownlow, Kellie [<mailto:Kellie.Brownlow@cobbcounty.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, July 15, 2015 6:02 PM
To: Chapman, Leroy (CMG-Atlanta)
Cc: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta)
Subject: Correction

Mr. Chapman,

Part of my job is to ensure media inquiries are responded to on behalf of Chairman Lee. As such, we have set up a protocol to make sure we respond in a timely manner. I understand your reporters have a job to do to gather and report information, and it is my job to help facilitate that.

In Dan Klepal's article today regarding updates to the Cobb County ethics code, it was reported that Chairman Lee refused to comment. This is not true. In fact, Mr. Klepal did not pose a question to Chairman Lee about the proposed ethics code amendments. Dan Klepal did approach the Chairman following the BOC meeting yesterday, but as several of my peers overheard, he asked Chairman Lee to comment on an issue related to campaign finance. Chairman had no comment on that issue. At that time, I reminded Dan that my job is to help him if he has any inquiries of Chairman Lee and to please contact me if that is the case. I did not receive an inquiry seeking comment on the proposed ethics changes.

This is not the first time something like this has happened. On June 28th Dan wrote an article on SunTrust Park and reported that Chairman Lee did not respond to his request for comment. Dan did not contact his office nor me requesting comment from the Chairman. Rather, he called his personal cell phone and left a voice mail which incidentally was not checked until after the story was published. As you can imagine, Chairman Lee receives dozens of

calls and voice messages daily. While Chairman does his best to respond to all calls regarding the business of the county, it is very difficult to keep up with all calls in real time.

As Deputy Chief, it is my job to receive and respond to all media inquiries of Chairman Lee. Media protocol is not an uncommon practice in local government and it is a practice that works very well with your peers at WSB, the Marietta Daily Journal, WABE and even your peers at the AJC on the editorial and Politifact teams. For some reason, Dan Klepal is the only reporter who will not contact Chairman Lee (or me) at his office.

I would like to point out that when Dan has submitted inquiries to me, I have responded. In fact, I recently worked with him to visit my office to take photos for a piece he was doing on the office renovation. However, since that visit he has stopped contacting me. Other professionals at the AJC have worked with me in a respectful and constructive manner. I know there is a protocol for communicating with the Mayor of Atlanta, CEO of DeKalb County, and other County Chairman that is respected by the journalists at your newspaper. As such, we would appreciate it if Mr. Klepal would kindly respect our process as well. As the purpose of it is to help make sure reporters are responded to in a timely manner. Further, we request you correct the record about Chairman Lee in today's story.

Respectfully,

Kellie Brownlow

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